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IT'S BEGINNING TO LOOK A LOT LIKE CHRISTMAS

Reg Ealey clears the snow off the Cameco Meewasin Skating Rink at PotashCorp Plaza in Saskatoon on Tuesday. LIAM RICHARDS/FOR METRO

Cozy up to a new cocktail

Local micro-distillery Lucky Bastard's Chai Vodka White Hot Chocolate will put the rosy in your cheeks and the curl in your toes. Look inside for the recipe PAGE 4

Saskatchewan Christmases fondly recalled

Writer Kathy Ullyott captures the prairie magic of family and home during the holidays PAGE 4

Eggnog puts spring in milk producers' step

Seasonal drink puts a bounce in sales during a month when overall milk sales tend to fall and that keeps dairy famers happy PAGE 3

What are you doing New Year's, New Year's Eve?

Plan a night out to remember — check out our suggestions including a swing dance at the Navy League Branch PAGE 4

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Milk producers say eggnog sales help keep them afloat

Big gulp.
Seasonal drink helps compensate for drop in milk sales as more people turn to booze late in the year

MORGAN MODJESKI
morgan.modjeski@metronews.ca

With the holidays right around the corner, Canadians are sipping on their favourite seasonal drink and for many that's eggnog, but some dairy producers say for them eggnog helps deal with the decline of milk drinkers over the holiday months.

Andrew Taylor, the plant manager with Hewitt's Dairy in Hagersville, Ont., said they see an increase of 10 to 15 per cent in sales and he says eggnog is the beverage behind the jump.

"Any increase in sales we look forward to, but we plan for it every year," said Taylor. "People look forward to it."

Taylor explained they usually see the increase from the beginning of December until early January.

"Overall milk sales tend to fall in December as people tend to drink other things, usually an alcoholic beverage, so anything that compensates for that is something that we look forward to," he said. "We rely on it, farmers need a consistent market and it helps to maintain that consistency."

WITH FILES FROM JANE CAULFIELD

Eggnog backstory

- Believed to have its origins in England, it was a popular beverage among the aristocracy because it was expensive to make.
- One theory about where the word "eggnog" came from is that "nog" is actually short for "noggin" — a small, wooden, carved mug.
- It is called coquito in Puerto Rico.
- In the Americas, colonists would mix their eggnog with rum because it was readily available and relatively inexpensive.

Some dairy farmers say an increased demand for eggnog helps compensate for a slump in milk sales over the holidays.
FLICKR.COM: REESECLLOYD

Former mayoral candidate faces weapons charges

Clay Mazurkewich
MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

Former mayoral candidate, Clay Mazurkewich said the reason he brought two airsoft pistols to a Saskatoon bar was because of threats he received during his mayoral run.

The 51-year-old was arrested Wednesday afternoon after police received reports that a man at the Coachmen Restaurant in Market Mall was in the possession of a handgun and had shown it to another person at the bar. Police arrived on scene and took Mazurkewich into custody.

He appeared in provincial court in Saskatoon on Thursday morning, where he told a provincial judge, "I had a pint," and the guns were for "recreational use," but denied he had waved the gun around.

However, he told reporters outside the courthouse he was carrying the guns for "safety," saying he was threatened during the election period and after.

"I thought, 'Well, you know what's a pellet gun,'" said Mazurkewich. "Maybe it will scare them off if they come knocking on my door — I've been robbed twice — so yeah, I got a reason to be concerned."

Mazurkewich was released from police custody on conditions, including a no-contact order with two individuals, no alcohol or bars, no firearms and he must submit to police searches if requested.

Mazurkewich is currently facing one charge of carrying an imitation of a weapon for purpose dangerous to the public peace. He will be back in court on Jan. 10 at 2 p.m.

MORGAN MODJESKI/METRO

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How the holidays bring you home

Mental plain.
Saskatchewan Christmases still resonate years later

KATHY ULLYOTT
saskatoon@metronews.ca

One late night in December, when I was 25, a couple of years after I'd moved from Saskatchewan to Toronto, my parents picked me up at the Regina airport for the two-hour drive home for Christmas. It was typically sub-sub-zero as we counted off the rhinestone string of heroically named villages on the familiar route north — Holdfast, Liberty, Stalwart, Imperial.

Then, in the distance off to the left, a cluster slowly brightened to glow a welcome: the Christmas lights of an isolated farm, as blue as lapis lazuli, under an impossibly vast and velvet sky.

What is it about the Christmas season, now as much a secular holiday as a religious one, that makes its memories so intense and indelible? Maybe it's that it engages so many senses — the sounds of familiar carols, the tastes of fruitcake and gingerbread, the brilliance of store windows at nightfall.

Maybe the winter solstice really is a time, as the ancient Celts and other cultures believed, when the veil between our world and that of the spirits thins, giving us a glimpse of our place in eternity.

Or maybe it's that the universal pause at the top of the year invites reflection and taking stock, just as it inspires compassion and generosity. In that breath, TV specials from your childhood, your own child's eyes on her first Christmas morning and shining moments with loved ones now gone all seem to pack themselves into a parcel of memories as dense, compact and vivid as a deck of cards.

Quoted

"What is it about the Christmas season ... that makes its memories so intense and indelible? Maybe it's that it engages so many senses — the sounds of familiar carols, the tastes of fruitcake and gingerbread, the brilliance of store windows."

I don't go home to Saskatchewan for Christmas every year now. The top of the year has become busy; my own children are starting to scatter; flights for four during the holidays are expensive.

But from the crowded aisles of a big-box home store this week, a faint Good King Wenceslas took me, suddenly, back to a Grade 4 Christmas concert, jostling with 23 other excited children as we waited behind a closed stage curtain for our turn to sing.

As my family unpacked tree ornaments from their nests of tissue, I lifted a sprig of ripe durum wheat that I brought from my dad's farm two decades ago and have placed on our Christmas tree every year since. Instead of Christmas, though, it brought back dusty golden harvests, with their long, molten sunsets and flocks of ducks flapping noisily up from the cut swaths.

This week in Toronto, it is 8 C and slightly damp — not at all like Christmases I remember. I am working in my third-floor home office, scrambling to bundle two weeks' worth of work into this one. Across the street, my neighbour is rigging a string of Christmas lights around his porch. His little daughter stamps in puddles; jacketless teenage boys shout and scramble in a game of street hockey.

My husband returns from a meeting; he has stopped to do a bit of shopping on the way home. My daughter dashes in and changes for her after-school job; I yell at her to remember to give me her Santa list.

My neighbour finishes up across the way and begins taking down his stepladder just as the sky begins to thicken into dusk. Night falls. He switches on his string of lights and they burst into tiny twinkling tongues of lapis-blue fire. Crowded chimney silhouettes disappear against the dark, and the clattering hockey sticks sift into dry tongues of snow licking across a Prairie highway. It is Christmas.

5 ways to kick off 2013

Looking for ideas for how to spend New Year's Eve? Make it a night to remember with these options.

JANE CAULFIELD
jane.caulfield@metronews.ca

1 Get on your dancing shoes

Paying homage to the 1940s and '50s, the Navy League Branch of Saskatoon is hosting a swing dance. Featuring the Stone Frigate Big Band, the dance starts at 8 p.m. at the HMCS Unicorn. Tickets are $35.

2 New Orleans comes north

Looking to jazz up your night? Head over to the Bassment for a New Orleans twist on the evening's festivities. Tickets range from $40 to $50 and include dinner.

3 For the rockin' revellers

A big house party more your speed? Prairieland Park is hosting a rockin' bash complete with live music and happy-hour prices. Tickets are $20 to $25 and doors open at 8:30 p.m.

4 Hop over to the Broadway Café

Dinner and dance? How about a sock hop? The Broadway Café is hosting a New Year's Eve party, complete with poodle skirts and live music. Tickets are $75 and doors open at 7:30 p.m.

5 Under the sea, under the seaaa ...

Need to remember warmer weather? Tequila Nightclub is hosting an underwater-themed bash, which includes a champagne toast at midnight. Cover for the event is $20 and doors open at 8 p.m.

Christmas Church Services

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Mon., Dec. 24, 7:00 p.m. Carols and Candles: Christmas Eve for the Whole Family
Sun, Dec. 30, 10:30 a.m. Family Worship: Our Own Christmas Story

Cheers. Drink away the cold with boozy hot chocolate, tea

'Tis the season for getting together with loved ones to share some joy and cheer, which often includes a toast to the new year with a cocktail or two. But are you feeling like you need to spice up your holiday drink menu? Rum and eggnog tasting more like rum and snooze-nog?

Well, local micro-distillery LB Distillers, also known as Lucky Bastard, has concocted a new beverage that is as cosy as it sounds — a chai-vodka white hot chocolate.

"I could just see myself curled up by a fire, reading a book with this drink," said co-owner Lacy Crocker.

The folks behind Lucky Bastard Distillers have come up with a chai-vodka white hot chocolate, a quintessential winter beverage. JANE CAULFIELD/METRO

Recipe:
— 1.5 ounces of Lucky Bastard Chai Vodka
— 5-6 ounces of your favourite white hot chocolate
— Whipped cream and cinnamon for garnish (marshmallows are good too)
— Your favourite mug

If you aren't a hot-chocolate fan, you can add a little something extra — that something being Lucky Bastard's Gambit Gin — to up a hot cup of peppermint tea.

Recipe:
— 1.5 ounces of Gambit Gin
— 5-6 ounces of peppermint tea
— Mint leaves for garnish
— Another favourite mug

While you can find LB Distillers products at many off-sales across the city, you may have to head over to the company's storefront at 1925 Ave. B N. to find the Chai Vodka, which is currently a limited addition to the product line.
JANE CAULFIELD/METRO

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Slain teacher protected students from gunman

Mourners exit a church in Katonah, N.Y., after the funeral for Anne Marie Murphy on Thursday. Murphy was killed when Adam Lanza walked into Sandy Hook Elementary School in Newtown, Conn., Dec. 14, and opened fire.
LINDSAY NIEGELBERG/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Sandy Hook shooting. 52-year-old one of six educators killed in Newtown massacre

A teacher who authorities said died trying to protect her students in the Connecticut school shooting that left 28 people dead was laid to rest Thursday.

Anne Marie Murphy, 52, was remembered as a teacher who "brought together a community, a nation, a world, now awed by her own life and death," in a eulogy by Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York.

Murphy's father, Hugh McGowan, said authorities told him that she died trying to protect her young pupils. Her body was found covering a group of children's bodies as if to shield them, McGowan said.

About 15 people arrived at St. Mary of the Assumption Church in Katonah, N.Y., in a yellow school bus with "Newtown," the name of the Connecticut town where the shooting occurred, written on its side. The church quickly filled and about 100 mourners waited outside.

A Justice Department official said the country's top lawyer, Attorney General Eric Holder, would visit the town Thursday to meet privately with first responders and law-enforcement officials.

At least nine funerals and wakes were held Wednesday for those who died when 20-year-old gunman Adam Lanza, armed with a military-style assault rifle, broke into Sandy Hook Elementary School and opened fire. He killed six adults and 20 children, all of them six or seven years old.

More tributes were scheduled for Friday and Saturday.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Archbishop

"Annie's life and death brings light, truth ... and love to a world often shrouded in darkness."
Timothy Dolan, Archbishop of New York

The best defence ... Teachers at Texas school to carry firearms

In the tiny Texas town of Harrold, children and their parents don't give much thought to safety at the community's lone school — mostly because some of the teachers are carrying concealed weapons.

The nearest sheriff's office is 30 minutes away, and people tend to know — and trust — one another. So the school board voted to let teachers bring guns to school.

"We don't have money for a security guard, but this is a better solution," superintendent David Thweatt said. "A shooter could take out a guard or officer with a visible, holstered weapon, but our teachers have master's degrees, are older and have had extensive training. And their guns are hidden. We can protect our children."

In the awful aftermath of last week's Connecticut elementary school shooting, lawmakers in a growing number of states — including Oklahoma, Missouri, Minnesota, South Dakota and Oregon — have said they will consider laws allowing teachers and school administrators to carry firearms at school.

Community support

"I think it's a great idea for trained teachers to carry weapons.... But I hate that it has come to this."
CaRae Reinisch, resident of Elliott, a town near Harold

Texas law bans guns in schools unless the school has given written authorization. Arizona and six other states have similar laws with exceptions for people who have licenses to carry concealed weapons.

Harrold's school board voted unanimously in 2007 to allow employees to carry weapons. After obtaining a state concealed-weapons permit, each employee who wants to carry a weapon must be approved by the board based on his or her personality and reaction to a crisis, Thweatt said.

Employees also must undergo training in crisis intervention and hostage situations. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Firearms. NRA to weigh in on gun violence in 'major news conference'

Now that President Barack Obama has demanded "real action, right now" against U.S. gun violence, attention turned Thursday to the coming "major news conference" by the country's top gun lobby, whose power for years has contributed to the political hesitation around the issue.

The National Rifle Association, which was silent for several days after last week's school shooting in Connecticut, has promised to make its announcement Friday — the last real work day before Washington, and the rest of the country, scatters for the long Christmas holiday.

Obama has asked the NRA, a key backer of many Republican politicians, to join the effort to reduce gun violence. Moving quickly after several congressional gun-rights supporters said they would consider new legislation to control firearms, the president said Wednesday he wants proposals on reducing gun violence that he can take to Congress by January.

Obama's insistence is a sharp contrast with his first four years in office, when he pressed little on the issue amid widespread political reluctance to take on the NRA and smaller lobbying groups.

The president acknowledged that the latest shooting had been "a wake-up call for all of us." Appealing to gun owners, he said he believes in the constitutional right to bear arms and the country's strong tradition of gun ownership.

Barack Obama THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

"I am also betting that the majority, the vast majority, of responsible, law-abiding gun owners would be some of the first to say that we should be able to keep an irresponsible, law-breaking few from buying a weapon of war," Obama said.

Along with asking Congress to reinstate an assault-weapons ban that expired in 2004, Obama asked lawmakers to pass legislation that would close the gun-show "loophole," which allows people to purchase firearms from private dealers without a background check.
THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Volunteer veteran stands guard at California school

A Marine veteran of Iraq and Afghanistan took up self-imposed duty in front of a central California elementary school in the wake of the Connecticut shooting.

Hughson Elementary School Principal Laura Fong said Sgt. Craig Pusley stood all day Wednesday in fatigues in front of the flag pole at the school just southeast of Modesto. He was not armed.

Pusley, who served two tours in Iraq and one in Afghanistan before leaving active duty last year, told Fong that "he wanted to make the kids feel safe in light of what happened at Sandy Hook Elementary," the principal said.

The veteran Marine arrived at the K-3 school a little before 7:30 am, Fong said, and asked permission to stand guard. He stood in front of the flag pole until 2:30 p.m., she said, without taking any breaks.

Sgt. Pusley is a father of a three-year-old and his wife is expecting another child. He told the Modesto Bee that he decided to take action after reading a Facebook post urging soldiers to be posted at every school in the wake of last week's tragic shooting in Connecticut.

"When I enlisted, I swore to defend this country from all enemies, foreign and domestic," Sgt. Pusley said. "I just want to be sure all these kids go home safe for Christmas." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

U.S Marine Corps Reserve Sgt. Craig Pusley stands guard as kindergarten student Liset Corona, 5, walks to her class at Hughson Elementary School on Wednesday. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Tragic car crash

Supreme Court will not hear liability appeal

The Supreme Court of Canada will not hear the appeal of two Ontario municipalities found liable for a crash that left two teenaged sisters in wheelchairs for the rest of their lives.

Shannon and Erica Deering, then 19 and 16, suffered catastrophic spinal injuries when their car left the road on their way to a movie theatre on Aug. 10, 2004.

The horrific crash left the Port Perry, Ont., sisters quadriplegic and gave rise to $30 million in claims as well as an eight-year legal battle with the City of Oshawa and Scugog Township.

In 2010, an Ontario Superior Court found Shannon Deering to be one-third liable for the crash, and the municipalities — located east of Toronto — liable for the balance.

The municipalities appealed, but the Appeal Court found they had failed to ensure the road was safe and were therefore mainly at fault even though the driver was speeding.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

Security measures

McGuinty wants 'locked door' policy in schools

Premier Dalton McGuinty says he wants a "locked door" policy at all elementary schools in Ontario starting next September.

McGuinty says he wants to reassure parents Ontario is doing all it can to ensure kids are safe in their classrooms after last week's shooting rampage in Newtown, Connecticut.

Only about 850 of the 4,000 elementary schools in the province took advantage of a provincial program to install video cameras outside school doors, but that was meant for buildings where the entrance was not in clear view of the office.

McGuinty says it should cost about $10 million to equip all elementary schools by the start of classes next fall with video cameras to make entrances more secure. However, he says schools will not be turned into fortresses with boarded-up windows.

The premier says the tragedy in Newtown made him question whether Ontario was doing all it could to guarantee parents schools are safe for their children.
THE CANADIAN PRESS

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Marineland. Inspectors set to take a look at animal graves

The provincial Environment Ministry is poised this week for a sweeping inspection of Marineland's mass graves of animals — graves it had no idea existed because the park has no permits.

The Niagara Falls tourist attraction has dug pits for decades to dispose of its animals, using heavy machinery to cover them up, according to former staffers.

There are four mass graves, two of them containing "more than 1,000 animals," said Marineland's former land-animal supervisor Jim Hammond.

Asked Wednesday if it has permits for its animal graves, Marineland spokesperson Ann Marie Rondinelli wrote in an email: "One of life's sad truths is that animals sometimes die in zoos, just as they do in the wild.

"Here at Marineland we have the greatest respect for the beautiful animals in our care in both life and death."

The graves contain the corpses of whales, dolphins, sea lions, seals and walruses, as well as bears, bison, deer and other animals at the park, which opened in 1961 under its owner John Holer.

Environment Ministry spokesperson Kate Jordan said the inspection was a "high priority" and a team was being assembled late Wednesday. The ministry found out about the mass graves when Torstar News Service called to ask about the legality and environmental impact of massive burial sites.

The province requires waste permits to dispose of animal corpses. Jordan said there are protocols surrounding the proper way to bury animals, periodic inspections of the sites and soil and water testing for contamination.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

U.S. Intelligence bill nears expiry, extension request goes to Senate

The U.S. government's authority to intercept electronic communications of foreigners — both spies and terrorist targets — will expire at year's end unless the Senate extends a law that is under challenge from a bipartisan group of senators.

In a case in which national security bumps up against privacy, more than a dozen senators say they're concerned that conversations and emails of Americans are swept up in the monitoring. Americans, they contend, can then become targets of surveillance without the protection of a court warrant.

Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid struggled Thursday to get the five-year extension of the Foreign Intelligence Surveillance Act before the Senate, but those questioning the law blocked any action until they could get votes on their proposals to modify the bill.

The Obama administration strongly defended the law, saying in a statement that it has been "invaluable to the U.S. government's efforts to detect and prevent threats to America and its allies, while providing robust protections for the civil liberties and privacy of U.S. persons.''

The statement added: "Failure to reauthorize the (law) would result in a significant loss of intelligence and impede the ability of the intelligence community to respond quickly to new threats and intelligence opportunities.'' THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Genital mutilation

UN calls for ban on female circumcision

The UN General Assembly unanimously approved a resolution Thursday calling for a global ban on female genital mutilation, a centuries-old practice stemming from the belief that circumcising girls controls women's sexuality and enhances fertility.

It has also been linked to religious and cultural practices, although Muslim and Christian leaders have spoken out against it.

Although not legally binding, General Assembly resolutions reflect international concerns and carry moral and political weight.

The UN said in 2010 that about 70 million girls and women had undergone the procedure, and the World Health Organization said about 6,000 girls were circumcised every day.

The resolution calls on the UN's 193 member states to condemn the practice and launch education campaigns to eliminate it.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

The 13 to watch in 2013

Portraits of society's rising stars were photographed at the corner of Yonge and Dundas in Toronto on Wednesday. In the front row: Lindsey Stewart, Dane Clark and Patrick Gunning. In the middle row: Amanda Lee Kew, Grant van Gameren, Cara Gee, Shadya Yasin, Jordan Subban and Dr. Samir Sinha. In the back row: Maria Franke, Dr. Danielle Martin, Yu-Ling Cheng and giant panda Er Shun. LUCAS OLENIUK/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE.

No monkeying around on flights

Apes on a plane. Air Canada no longer transporting primates for research purposes

A Canadian regulator has ruled that Air Canada is within its rights to refuse to transport primates that are being used for research.

A Canadian Transportation Agency tribunal issued its decision Thursday, dismissing the complaints of health research groups arguing the airline should be required to carry the animals. It says that Air Canada's restrictions are reasonable and aren't discriminatory because the carrier risks losing passengers who disagree with research using primates.

The original complaint against the air carrier's policy came from Steven Liss, vice-principal of research at Queen's University, and the Public Health Agency of Canada. They argued the policy unfairly discriminates against them.

However, Air Canada argued that it has received 47,000 letters from the public protesting its transport of primates being used for research, and some people threatened to stop travelling with the airline if it didn't refuse to carry the research animals.

The agency accepted in its decision that Air Canada had a legitimate concern of losing passengers that far outweighed the possible loss of income they earn from transporting the primates.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Quoted

"Queen's University also points out that animals may need to be transported several thousand kilometres by truck through the United States ... and Canada, which may cause unnecessary stress for the animals."

Excerpt from the decision

Scientists have sights set on new planets

Five new planets orbiting a sun very like Earth's own have been detected just 12 light years away, an international team of astrophysicists reports.

One of those planets sits in the "habitable zone" just far enough away from the star Tau Ceti to support water and thus life similar to Earth's.

Tau Ceti is a celestial neighbour in our Milky Way Galaxy, visible just by looking up at the night sky. Scientists have long studied it but never before found evidence that it had planets circling it.

Researchers from England, Finland, Chile, Australia and the United States took 6,000 observations from three different telescopes then constructed a new system of algorithms to figure out what the noise signals they picked up could mean.

"I am very confident that the signals are there," lead author Mikko Tuomi of the University of Hertfordshire told Torstar News Service.

What scientists can't say with absolute certainty is that the signals are planets, even though they behave like planets in orbit and they can't see what else they could be.

"We initially believed that there are no planets," said Tuomi of the start of the study. They expected to use Tau Ceti as a target for their work with a new noise-modelling system.

The discovery, fellow study researcher Steven Vogt said, helps support astrophysics' rapidly coalescing point of view that most stars have their own planets and many of those planets are going to be like Earth. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Four dead as snowstorm slams midwestern U.S.

Cameron Jones gets some help after getting stuck in a snowbank in Omaha, Neb., Thursday after the first major snowstorm of the season. THE OMAHA WORLD-HERALD/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Winter's here.
Slippery roads, cancelled flights and blankets of snow may put a damper on holiday travels

Four people died as the first major snowstorm of the season hit the U.S. Midwest early Thursday, threatening to disrupt some of the nation's busiest airports ahead of the holiday weekend.

Forecasters warned that heavy snow coupled with strong winds could create blizzard conditions from Kansas to Wisconsin after the storm blanketed the Rocky Mountains earlier in the week.

In Chicago, officials at O'Hare International Airport reported more than 90 cancellations.

In Iowa, state police said a 25-vehicle pileup killed at least one person.

In Wisconsin, sheriff's officials said slick conditions led to at least two deaths late Wednesday when a driver lost control of his car. In Utah, a woman who tried to walk for help after her car became stuck in snow died Tuesday night. Search-and-rescue crews on snowmobiles found her buried in the snow.

The heavy, wet snow made some unplowed streets in Des Moines, Iowa, nearly impossible to navigate in anything other than a four-wheel drive vehicle. Even streets that had been plowed were snow-packed and slippery.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Southern toll

- **Mobile, Ala.** High winds peeled the roofs off buildings and toppled trucks but no one was injured.
- **Mississippi, Louisiana, Alabama.** Tornado warnings remained in effect in parts of these areas.

Environment Canada. Prolonged warm weather was the big story of 2012

Canada coped with a slew of natural disasters from freak storms to floods this calendar year, but the country's meteorological watchdog says Canadians will remember 2012 as the year when the weather was too hot to handle.

Environment Canada says unusually high temperatures from coast to coast ranked as the top climate-related story of the year.

Senior climatologist David Phillips says Canadians experienced warmer-than-average conditions right through the year, making the stretch from January to November the fourth-warmest on record since 1948.

Phillips says the three-month stretch from July to September was the warmest in 65 years. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Wild winds

19

Number of tropical storms that rolled through North America this year—double the amount of a typical season.

A house sinks in Two Mile, B.C., due to heavy rainfall. Experts say Canadians will remember the heat over natural disasters this year. THE CANADIAN PRESS

Skiing accident

Father and sons rescued at resort

For the second time in less than a week, rescuers have been called out to help people who went out of bounds in a B.C. ski area.

In the latest case, a father and his three sons got lost Wednesday after leaving the marked ski area of the Revelstoke Mountain Resort. The RCMP say they were rescued Thursday morning.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

South Africa

Toad stowed in candlestick

It's a real-life Mr. Toad's Wild Ride.

Animal-rescue officials in South Africa say they found a toad from China hidden inside a porcelain candlestick.

The Star newspaper reported that workers had to break the candlestick to get the toad out. It was still alive.

The animal is not endangered. But because the toad is a possible invasive species for South Africa, workers have to put the animal down.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Weekend of hope for survivors

Breast cancer. Free event in B.C. offers participants yoga, meditation, snowboarding, skiing lessons and cooking classes

LIZ BROWN
liz.brown@metronews.ca

This February, 10 Canadian breast-cancer survivors will have the opportunity to spend an all-expenses-paid weekend at RED Mountain Resort in Rossland, B.C., which will focus on health and wellness — with ski and snowboarding lessons from pro athletes.

Boarding for Breast Cancer (B4BC), the organization that funds the event, will select these participants from entries in a free lottery to be held on Dec. 28.

The weekend, called ReTreat Yourself, is the brainchild of organizer Megan Pischke, a pro snowboarder who first got involved with raising breast-cancer awareness 17 years ago, when a fellow snowboarder, Monica Steward, succumbed to the disease at the age of 28.

"(Monica's) legacy has held true with a lot of us, as far as promoting a healthy lifestyle through our sport," says Pischke.

Originally from Colorado, Pischke first offered the retreats in the U.S., but now, as a resident of Canada, she is organizing the first one here in what she hopes will become an annual event.

"I was always involved in awareness and fundraising events and then a girlfriend and I started to do these snowboard retreats," she says. "They marry my lifestyle, which was pro snowboarding, doing yoga, eating healthy and just being connected with the outdoors."

While the weekend offers 10 paid spots for breast-cancer survivors, there are also a limited number of spaces available for purchase by the general public, at a price of $1,199, which includes accommodations, meals and all activities over the three days. The retreat offers yoga, meditation, snowboarding and skiing lessons and cooking classes by cookbook author Marianne Abraham.

ReTreaters participate in a seminar with Linda Kennoy, during last year's event in Colorado. CONTRIBUTED

"When I started doing these retreats in Colorado, my goal was to have women walk away from them full of hope and inspiration and a little more educated," says Pischke.

She cites one example of a woman who attended a weekend in Colorado who told her that the meditation practices she learned on the retreat had shifted her perspectives on fear.

"I've seen a lot of women who get through this … and they're ready to move on, yet they're still holding onto a lot of fear in their life. The meditation helped this woman so she was able to shift her perspective and move past that fear," she says.

Pischke says she's driven to offer these retreats because of the people around her who have been impacted by the disease.

"My grandmother passed away from complications due to breast cancer and it's something I have a lot of empathy for and I really want to stand strong and do as much as I can to raise awareness," she says.

How to enter

The lottery is open to any breast-cancer survivor in Canada who has the OK from their doctor to participate in the activities.

- To enter, you can email survivorship@b4bc.org and you will be sent an entry form.
- The deadline for entries is Dec. 28.
- Winners will be contacted Jan. 9 and the retreat takes place from Feb. 2-4 at RED Mountain Resort in Rossland, B.C.

London. Assange gives speech from balcony of the Ecuadorean Embassy

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange emerged for a rare public address Thursday, praising jailed U.S. soldier Bradley Manning in an address delivered from the balcony of the Ecuadorean Embassy in London.

Addressing supporters on a cold and wet English evening, the 41-year-old Australian looked fit and healthy despite half a year spent trapped inside the small apartment he shares with diplomatic staff.

He gave no hint that he would end the standoff, which has seen him spend six months as a fugitive from European justice, saying he was holed up at the embassy for fear of the U.S. investigation into his activities.

"While this immoral investigation continues, and while the Australian government will not defend the journalism and publishing of WikiLeaks, I must remain here," he said.

While the U.S. Justice Department has launched an investigation into WikiLeaks' spectacular disclosures of U.S. secrets, Assange is currently wanted by police over allegations of sexual assault stemming from a trip to Sweden in mid-2010.

WikiLeaks founder Julian Assange speaks from Ecuador's Embassy in London. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Many WikiLeaks supporters have suggested that the allegations are a ploy to extradite Assange, first to Sweden and then to the U.S. The Swedish government and Assange's alleged victims deny it.

Assange listed a series of jailed figures, including Bahraini human-rights activist Nabeel Rajab and alleged Anonymous hacker Jeremy Hammond. But the biggest cheers came when he praised Bradley Manning, the alleged source of WikiLeaks' most earth-shaking revelations.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Breezy Point's tree of hope

Hand-painted stars painted by children hang from a scorched tree among the ruins of houses in the Breezy Point section of New York, Thursday. One hundred homes in the neighbourhood were burned to the ground during a fire caused by Superstorm Sandy.

MARK LENNIHAN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Truth and Reconciliation Commission. Feds refusing to hand over documents: Lawyer

The Canadian government cannot be allowed to renege on a legal deal with aboriginal people simply because sticking to the terms would cost too much, an Ontario court heard Thursday.

At issue, a lawyer for the Truth and Reconciliation Commission said, is the government's refusal to organize and turn over millions of records related to what he called "the highest level of human tragedy" — the Indian residential school system.

Those records, lawyer Julian Falconer told Justice Stephen Goudge, go to the commission's core mandate of creating a comprehensive and lasting account of the shameful century of abuse.

"One day the light switch went on that this was a really expensive obligation, so history gets changed," Falconer said. "It's all about money."

The commission is asking the courts to clarify the government's obligations under the multibillion-dollar settlement reached in 2007 with victims of the Indian residential school system.

Terms of the settlement included creation of the truth commission now led by Justice Murray Sinclair.

The cost of truth

In the 1990s, thousands of victims sued the churches that ran the Indian residential schools and the Canadian government. The suits were settled in 2007 and the Truth and Reconciliation Commission was set up.

- The commission worries that Ottawa's intransigence will make it impossible to complete its work, as required, by 2014.
- Some estimates of the cost of turning over the records are more than $100 million.
- Justice Goudge repeatedly asked what documents are "relevant," and about the limits of Ottawa's legal duty to provide them.

While Ottawa has turned over about one million documents to date, 23 of 24 government departments have now refused to provide the materials and millions of records remain outstanding.

"Pure and simple, that can't be right," Falconer told court.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Supreme Court split on freedom to testify in a veil

Balancing act. Ruling states each judge must weigh religious rights and right to a fair trial

A sharply divided Supreme Court of Canada was not able to definitively rule Thursday whether a woman can wear a religious veil known as a niqab while testifying in court.

In a rare 4-2-1 split decision, the Supreme Court ruled that a witness can cover their face in certain circumstances.

The case pitted two protections in the Charter of Rights and Freedoms against each other — religious freedom versus an accused person's right to a fair trial.

The practical effect of that decision was to pass the case back to an Ontario trial judge that had just begun a preliminary hearing.

The Supreme Court was not able to definitively rule on niqabs in court.
MAYA ALLERUZZO/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS FILE

In this case, a Muslim woman sought to wear a niqab while testifying against two men she claims sexually assaulted her as a child.

The two men claim the charter allows them to confront their accuser and observe her facial expressions as she testifies. Due to a publication ban, the woman can only be identified as N.S.

Chief Justice Beverley McLachlin wrote for the majority and affirmed the two charter rights should receive the fullest possible expression.

McLachlin spelled out a four-step analysis that the judge at N.S.'s preliminary hearing can now use to determine the issue. The ruling will also be a precedent in other cases.

"The judge must assess all these factors and determine whether ... the salutary effects of requiring the witness to remove the niqab outweigh the deleterious effects of doing so."

The ruling told trial judges to ask themselves three questions: Would requiring the witness to remove the niqab interfere with her religious freedom? Would permitting the witness to wear it create a serious risk to trial fairness? Is there a way to accommodate both rights? THE CANADIAN PRESS

Monkey mom melancholy

Media swarm Yasmin Nakhuda as she leaves a hearing about her monkey Darwin — the Ikea monkey — with his coat in her hands at the Superior Court of Justice in Oshawa, Ont. The custody case is expected to resume in mid-January. RENE JOHNSTON/TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

First Nations protest

Woman charged in hammer attack

A woman is facing a mischief charge after footage of her allegedly attacking a First Nations protester in London, Ont., was posted on YouTube.

The video shows a woman walking out of an apartment building, talking briefly with protesters then hitting a car with a hammer. ANGELA MULLINS/METRO IN LONDON, ONT.

Edutainment

Teacher in trouble over drag video

In the small community of Brentwood Bay on Vancouver Island, a video featuring bikini-clad drag queens has been deemed too racy for the classroom.

Brentwood Elementary School teacher Joe Winkler showed the clip to his Grade 4 students as an introduction to transgender issues.

After parent complaints, Winkler was suspended without pay pending an investigation in January. LUKE SIMCOE/METRO ONLINE

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Olympian working as an escort

Double life. After reports of prostitution, runner Suzy Favor Hamilton tweets that she's been working for an escort service for the past year

Olympian Suzy Favor Hamilton
JOHN BAZEMORE/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Three-time Olympic runner Suzy Favor Hamilton has admitted to leading a double life as an escort.

She apologized Thursday after a report by The Smoking Gun website said she had been working as a prostitute in Las Vegas.

The 44-year-old Favor Hamilton lives in Madison, Wis. The Smoking Gun said she has been working for the past year for an escort service.

Soon after the story appeared online, Favor Hamilton released a series of tweets saying in part that she was "drawn to escorting in large part because it provided many coping mechanisms for me when I was going through a very challenging time with my marriage and my life."

A middle-distance runner, Favor Hamilton competed for the U.S. at the Olympics in 1992, 1996 and 2000 but did not win a medal. She won seven U.S. national titles.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Miss Universe crown heads back to U.S.

Miss USA, Olivia Culpo, left, is crowned Miss Universe during the Miss Universe competition Wednesday in Las Vegas. Twenty-year-old Culpo, an American university student, won the title, replacing outgoing champion Leila Lopes of Angola and beating out 88 competitors from six continents. JULIE JACOBSON/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Unlucky 2013?

Good luck charms installed in Times Square

Officials in New York City have gathered good luck charms to accompany the unlucky number 13 that will light up when the New Year's Eve ball drops in Times Square.

The New York Post reports that 13 good luck charms will be installed along with the sign atop One Times Square for the celebration that will ring in the new year.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Deadly cruise

Italian prosecutors finish Concordia shipwreck probe

Prosecutors in Tuscany have officially finished their probe of the Costa Concordia shipwreck that killed 32 people off the Italian coast. State TV quoted Chief Prosecutor Francesco Verusio as saying Capt. Francesco Schettino risks 20 years in prison if convicted of manslaughter and abandoning ship.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Mining prospects empower remote Oji-Cree reserve

Chief Eli Moonias holds up an autographed Toronto Maple Leafs' Wendel Clark jersey, from the Noront mining company, on the Oji-Cree reserve Tuesday in Marten Falls, Ont. RYAN REMIORZ/THE CANDIAN PRESS

For Christmas, Chief Eli Moonias received a Toronto Maple Leafs jersey autographed by Wendel Clark.

His remote northern Ontario community of Marten Falls got 50 turkeys and a visit from Santa, laden with children's gifts.

And in March, the 61-year-old chief will be granted his wish of travelling to China — if he can get his passport in time.

They're all gifts from mining companies who need the chief's support to develop what could be a world-class base-metal discovery.

Moonias's community sits next to what has become known as the Ring of Fire. Marten Falls is a small, fly-in reserve — just three streets of houses for about 300 people at the junction of the Albany and Ogoki rivers.

It's in the middle of one of the only forests in the world that has never been touched by industry, an area that hosts six of Canada's biggest rivers.

When trapping for furs lost its lustre several decades ago, nothing replaced it in Marten Falls.

Unless the residents are working for the band office or a government-run social service, they're almost certainly unemployed — and more often than not, addicted to prescription painkillers at the expense of putting food on the table for their families.

Never have they felt more empowered.

"If you don't reassure me, that's when I say no," said Moonias.

About 130 kilometres to the north of the reserve, multinational miner Cliffs Natural Resources wants to develop a huge chromite mine to make a key ingredient in stainless steel. The firm brought Marten Falls the Christmas turkeys.

Next door, Toronto-based Noront Resources wants to mine nickel and other base metals. Noront employees chipped together to bring the Leafs shirt, Santa and an entertainment troupe of breakdancers.

Co-operation from First Nations is essential for both companies and for anyone else wanting to do business in the remote James Bay lowlands.

THE CANDIAN PRESS

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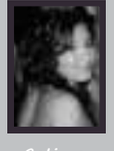
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Y kant Canaydians spel? Blame it on the Internet

Disappearing skills.
Digital life is ruining our ability to do basic tasks such as spell properly, recall phone numbers and write by hand

A woman types while surfing the Internet in North Vancouver on Wednesday. Our continued reliance on technology means we're no longer very good at undertaking manual, old-fashioned tasks. JONATHAN HAYWARD/THE CANADIAN PRESS

Canadians may be among the world's most prolific Internet users, but it seems all that time online hasn't made us a nation of careful spellers.

Many of us often type "facebok" into Google and rather than correcting the obvious mistake, let the search engine fix it. Monitoring Canadians' search habits would reveal that many, many more consistently type in "faceboo," "faebook" and "fcaebook" — but they know Google will get the point.

Others can't be bothered to tap out even eight characters and have learned that entering just "face" or "fb" will get them exactly the link they're seeking.

Is that lazy or efficient? Should we be thanking Google's engineers for saving us a few seconds or lament that technology is dooming us to intellectual laziness?

It seems hardly anyone can remember phone numbers anymore since we starting storing them in our mobile phones.

Outside of schools and some workplaces, the practice of putting pen to paper is becoming increasingly rare. To many, scribbling with a pen feels quaint in today's digital age.

Who needs maps and a sense of direction with GPS technology — which is now nearly ubiquitous on smartphones and tablets — to guide the way?

And now voice-recognition software is exploding in efficiency and popularity, raising the prospect that typing could eventually become another skill that's made redundant by convenient, task-relieving technology.

Quoted

"When you're typing ... you don't have to think — (and autocorrect) thinks for you. So I was like, 'Wow, I'm really scary now when I don't have Google or spellcheck to help me out.'"
Matthew Thomas, 33

For Matthew Thomas, 33, it was the signing of a birthday card that made him consider just how infrequent old-fashioned manual tasks like handwriting have become in his typical routine.

"I realized how rarely I'm actually ever writing anything by hand and there was like a moment of panic where I felt a little scared because as I was writing I was having a hard time," Thomas said, noting that he felt the need to concentrate more and think about the act of writing compared to the automatic process of typing.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Wireless industry. Data use fuels revenue growth

Here's my cell number. Call me, maybe? Or maybe not. Cellphone users are doing less calling as they buy more smartphones and use the device for texting, emailing, web surfing, mobile apps, social networking and watching videos.

And it's that surge in data use that Canada's telecom companies — big and small — are banking on as the revenue driver of the future.

"It's no longer just your teenage kids. It's everybody," telecom analyst Brahm Eiley said. "They use their phone the way they would use their PC," he added.

Dan Maitland has an iPhone and hardly uses it for calls. "These are not just phones," said Maitland, 39, who makes software that helps train pilots to be safer at flight simulator company CAE Inc. in Montreal.

"They are small computers that have the ability to make a phone call."

Maitland said he uses his iPhone for such things as web searches, apps, accessing files for work and reading. And he is doing exactly what wireless providers expect and want him to do to help increase their data revenues in the years ahead.

The amount of voice minutes used by consumers on cellphones isn't increasing, said Eiley, co-founder of the Convergence Consulting Group in Toronto. "Over the last two years, voice minutes have not seen any growth, whereas smartphone penetration has almost doubled."

Faster wireless networks are also helping drive the increasing use of data by consumers, Eiley added.

Rogers, Bell and Telus have been experiencing year-over-year growth in wireless data revenues with the rise of smartphones.

By the end of this year, Eiley said, data will make up roughly 39 per cent of service revenue, which includes voice and data, for Canada's major wireless providers.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

By the numbers

55%

The Convergence Consulting Group expects that about 55 per cent of all cellphone users in Canada will have smartphones by the end of this year. That's expected to increase to 65 per cent by the end of 2013 and go up to 80 per cent by year-end 2016.

As House GOP yanks Plan B, fiscal cliff draws nearer

Republicans in the U.S. House of Representatives, confronted with a revolt among the party's rank and file, abandoned a vote Thursday night on politically charged but symbolic legislation aimed at averting a fast-approaching "fiscal cliff," after failing to gather enough support for a measure meant to strengthen the party's position ahead of final negotiations with President Barack Obama.

The abrupt turn of events left precious little time for a divided government to prevent across-the-board tax increases and deep spending cuts from taking effect with the new year. Economists say the combination threatens a return to recession for an economy that has been recovering slowly from the last one.

House Speaker John Boehner's so-called Plan B legislation was drafted unilaterally by Republicans who control the House and faced sure defeat in the Democrat-held Senate.

It was crafted to protect almost all Americans from the expiration of Bush-era tax cuts on Jan. 1, 2013, but would have let rates increase for people earning more than $1 million US annually. That violated long-standing Republican anti-tax orthodoxy and triggered the opposition of fiscal conservatives.

In a brief statement, Boehner said the bill "did not have sufficient support from our members to pass" and challenged Obama and Democratic Senate Majority Leader Harry Reid to work on legislation to avert the fiscal cliff.

The White House, in a statement released shortly after, said the president's "main priority is to ensure that taxes don't go up on 98 per cent of Americans and 97 per cent of small businesses in just a few short days. The president will work with Congress to get this done and we are hopeful that we will be able to find a bipartisan solution quickly." THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christmas break

- The House will not meet again until after Christmas, if then, and the Senate is expected to meet briefly on Friday, then not reconvene until next Thursday.
- The fiscal cliff has dominated the post-election session of Congress that now seems certain to extend well beyond Christmas. More broadly, it marks the end of a tumultuous two-year period in which dozens of conservative Republicans roared into the House demanding lower taxes, yet now find themselves two years later called on by their own leadership to raise rates on upper incomes.

Market Minute

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12,388.71 (-14.92)

OIL
$90.13 US (+15¢)

GOLD
$1,645.90 US (-$21.80)

Natural gas: $3.46 US (+14¢)
Dow Jones: 13,311.72 (+59.75)

New York

Madoff's brother to serve 10 years over Ponzi scandal

The brother of imprisoned financier Bernard Madoff was sentenced Thursday to 10 years in prison for crimes committed in the shadow of his notorious sibling by a judge who said she disbelieved his claims that he did not know about the epic fraud.

Peter Madoff, 67, agreed to serve the maximum sentence allowable to the charges of conspiracy and falsifying the books and records of an investment adviser that he pleaded guilty to in June.

The judge urged him to tell the truth even after he reports to prison on Feb. 6 about what he knows about the multi-decade fraud that cost thousands of investors their original $20-billion US investment. She said Peter Madoff was "frankly not believable" when he claimed he only learned about the fraud when his brother revealed it to him just before he surrendered to authorities. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Downloading option

Keep those tweets! Twitter introduces personal archive

Twitter is offering its users a chance to keep a digital scrapbook of all their tweets. The tool, announced this week, is designed to make it easier for people to review all their activity on Twitter's messaging service.

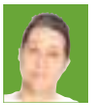
When it's available, the downloading option will appear at the bottom of each user's settings menu.

Twitter, which is based in San Francisco, said it may take a few weeks before everyone gets the feature.

After a records request is made, users will receive an email on how to download their personal archive. For Twitter's earliest users, the records date back to 2006 when Twitter started.

Twitter users already have been able to peruse their past tweets by navigating to their personal profile page. But going that route is more cumbersome because it requires scrolling down a page that can sometimes be slow to display additional tweets. THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

MAPLE SYRUP HEIST, RAPTORS BACK ON THE BALL AND A TOP-10 HIT



THE LIST
Mike Benhaim
metronews.ca

1 **Say what?** South African President Jacob Zuma maintains leadership of the currently ruling African National Congress party by defeating deputy president Kgalema Motlanthe with a dubious 75 per cent majority vote. Perhaps it's just that the robocalls had trouble pronouncing the name Kgalema Motlanthe.

2 **Slap-happy.** Researchers at the University of Pittsburgh have created a sophisticated prosthetic arm that can translate brain signals into the appropriate movements. While a definite boon for the physically challenged, I raise two concerns: You just know some rich guy is eventually going to buy a couple of extra arms for no good reason, and someone having a bad dream will end up slapping the heck out of their bed-partner.

3 **Holy crepes.** After a huge manhunt, Quebec police have arrested more than a dozen accused assailants in what will one day be known as the Great Maple Syrup Heist of 2012. Officers also recovered important paraphernalia used in the production of maple syrup, and around $18 million worth of our nation's most delicious natural resource (I believe that's street value). The province has been dealing with controversies over corruption and organized crime, but they'll be damned if they are going to sit by and let citizens endure Christmas with dry, unsavoury pancakes.

4 **Bac off.** Dollarama has pulled two brands of cleansing wipes from its shelves after tests by CBC News revealed unacceptable levels of bacteria. It's reassuring to know that all of the other products we use to rid our skin of impurities contain "acceptable" levels of bacteria.

5 **Kill me, maybe?** The votes are in, and Carly Rae Jepsen's Call Me Maybe is the song of the year. While I am pleased for our homegirl, after the millionth listen I respectfully request, for the love of God, that someone call this girl already!

6 **Fields of dreams.** The Toronto Raptors welcomed back Landry Fields, who was cleared by team doctors after undergoing elbow surgery over a month ago. The team is on a four-game winning streak, and Fields is anxious to jump in and get them back to their comfort zone.

7 **Winter wonders.** Monkeys shopping, eagles snatching babies, cows falling from trucks — it brings to mind fond memories of something my mother used to say: "If your flying baby cries over a truckload of spilled cows, no one's ever going to buy your sharp-dressed monkey." In fairness, English was not her first language.

8 **And the winner is ...** Cassadee Pope. Pope is now officially The Voice. Fans voted for The Personality as well, but to me she'll always be The Legs. Congrats, Cassadee.

9 **My favourite things.** This week in 1985, Born in the U.S.A. by Bruce Springsteen surpassed Michael Jackson's Thriller as the second-longest-lasting album on Billboard's American Top 10. It stayed there for 79 weeks. So what mega-singing sensation is powerful enough to top these two superstars for the honour of being No. 1? At 109 consecutive weeks ... Julie Andrews with The Sound of Music. Of course it was.

Follow The Metro List on Twitter @TheMetroList

The Sound of Music has fought off the likes of Born in the U.S.A. and Thriller in retaining the record for most consecutive weeks on Billboard's Top 10. CONTRIBUTED

May your days be merry and bright

MATT YORK/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christmas circuit

Don't get blinded by the lights

A woman walks along Natal Circle viewing Christmas lights in Gilbert, Ariz., in this photo taken earlier this month.

As Christmas decorations light up across the globe, take these precautions to avoid a holiday mishap.

• **Sparkle without the spark.** Turn off the electricity to the supply outlet before working with outdoor wiring. Unplug light strings before replacing bulbs and check to ensure replacement bulbs match the voltage and wattage of the original. To avoid a shock from damaged wire, use insulated fasteners rather than metal nails or tacks to hold light strings in place.

• **Stay dry.** Keep electrical connectors for outdoor lights above ground, out of water, and away from metal eavestroughs. Connect outdoor lighting into receptacles protected by weatherproof ground-fault circuit interrupters (GFCI). These can provide protection from electric shock by sensing ground leakage and cutting electrical power.

• **Put your faith in the magic of the holidays but don't fall for fakes.** Avoid counterfeit electronic decorations that haven't been certified for safe use. Look for the mark from an accredited certification organization like CSA Group.

NEWS CANADA

Pales in comparison

Neighbour cops out on lights

An Arizona woman who knew she couldn't compete head-on with her neighbour's elaborate Christmas-light display is attracting attention for her response.

Using red and green lights, Kristina Green of Maricopa, Ariz., spelled out the word "ditto" and made an arrow pointing toward her neighbour's home.

KNXV-TV reports that Green's display is made of around 600 lights. Her neighbour's setup has about 16,000 colourful lights. Green has created a Facebook page for her "ditto" sign.

The Christmas light competition heats up for some neighbourhoods, while other neighbours go with a "ditto" sign and an arrow. SCREEN GRAB

Last year, a family in Beaverton, Ore., also erected the word "ditto" with an arrow on the side of their own home toward a neighbour's house as part of an online movement.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Metropolitan Panel

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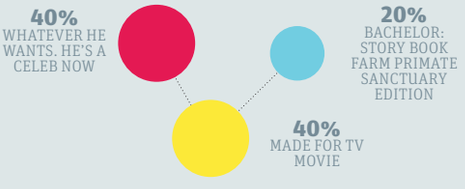
What's next for the Ikea monkey?



Twitter

@SteveOSmith:
I realize its an optional holiday in Saskatchewan, but having to book off Boxing Day somehow feels wrong... #fb

@SaskGregger:
If you need me I'll be offline for the next 24 hours. I already can't stand everyone's ridic posts re end of the world #SOS

@kdwoww:
Dear #Saskatoon, why are you so cold?! #yxe

@Devin_LJohnson:
I move to Saskatoon tomorrow. That's pretty neat.

@HipsterCraig:
Can't wait for #hipster casual Friday tomorrow. The one day a week I don't have to wear coloured women's jeans. #yxe

@dril128:
#yxecc #yxe appreciate removal of ruts, but now cars park 3-5 feet away from curb, which creates huge safety problems. do second pass/pickup

metro

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This is 40 sees Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann reprise their roles as the warring couple in Knocked Up. HANDOUT

Reel Guys

RICHARD CROUSE AND MARK BRESLIN

This is all too familiar

Biting honesty.

Judd Apatow's latest comedy pleases with its realistic take on life in middle age

Richard: Mark, after writing that synopsis, I feel it necessary to remind everyone that this is a comedy, so mixed into this study of midlife disappointment are some keenly honed and very funny observations. It's a blend of heart and humour, frequently in the same scene, and often in the same sentence. When Pete says to Debbie, "We're like Simon and Garfunkel and you turned me into Garfunkel," it's a funny line, delivered well, but also a loaded one that places his unhappiness front and centre. It's that kind of writing and performance that makes you laugh and cringe at the same time. What did you think?

Mark: It's Apatow's best movie, but not necessarily his funniest. The comedy comes intermittently in between stretches of a married couple bickering, experiencing a financial meltdown, problems with their kids and their parents. Just like real life. But I'm not sure the very funny comedy bits redeem the rest of the movie's grim and lacerating honesty.

RC: I think Apatow is trying to get that James Brooks magical mix of funny and raw emotion. The ratio might be a bit off here, but his cast — Rudd and Mann — both bring considerable likeability and comic chops, but temper that with resentment and dissatisfaction. Mann is particularly good. A scene with a hockey player who doesn't realize she is married is funny but framed with a kind of vulnerability that elevates Debbie from stock character to believable person.

MB: I found this movie less sentimental than most of Brooks' work, but the cast does make the bitter pill seem a bit sweeter. Not just Rudd and Mann, but the smaller parts — Albert Brooks and John Lithgow as their respective fathers, Jason Segel as the insufferable personal trainer and Apatow's own daughters as the couple's siblings, all work wonders. And two comic set pieces late in the movie — when most directors would be sprinting to the finish line — one with Charlene Yi, the other with Melissa McCarthy — are comedy gold. Your favourite funny bit?

RC: I loved everything to do with the Graham Parker storyline. As the retro rock act Rudd's character is trying to promote, Parker — who was one of my 1970s real-life punk rock heroes — gamely allows himself to be the butt of a lot of jokes, including my favourite from Chris O'Dowd, who says, "It's hard to watch a band when you know all of them were alive on D Day."

MB: Casting Parker was such an inspired choice! I hope that life will imitate art and people will get interested in his music again. But the movie is full of such inspired offbeat picks. That was Tatum O'Neal as the realtor and radio talkshow hero Phil Hendrie who attacks Rudd after the bicycle crash.

Synopsis

This is 40 takes place in the week between Pete and Debbie's (Paul Rudd and Leslie Mann reprising their roles from Knocked Up) 40th birthdays. Although Debbie lies about how old she is, larger problems include constantly warring kids (Maude and Iris Apatow), an empty bank account made worse by a freeloading father (Albert Brooks), an embezzling employee and relationship doubts triggered by Debbie's loaded question, "If I hadn't gotten pregnant 14 years ago, would we still be together?"

- **Richard:** ●●●●○
- **Mark:** ●●●●○

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Broadway Theatre
715 Broadway Ave.

The Ambassador (STC) Fri 7 Sat 9 Sun 7
Holy Motors (STC) Wed 9 Thu 7
A Late Quartet (14A) Fri 9 Sat 7 Sun 9 Wed 7 Thu 9
No Films Showing Today (STC) Mon-Tue

Cineplex Odeon Centre
3510 8th St. East

Flight (14A) Fri-Sun 7:20-10:20 Mon 7:20
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (14A) Fri 6:45-10:25 Sat-Sun 12-3-6:45-10:25 Mon 12-3-6:45 Tue 2:45-6:30-8 Wed-Thu 12-3-6:45-10:25
Lincoln (PG) Fri 6:50-10:10 Sat-Sun 12:10-3:30-6:50-10:10 Mon 12:10-3:30-6:50 Tue 3:30-6:50-10:10 Wed-Thu 12:10-3:20-6:30-9:50
Les Misérables (PG) Tue 3:10-6:40-10:05 Wed-Thu 11:50-3:10-6:35-10:10
Parental Guidance (G) Tue 2:40-5:20-7:50-10:20 Wed-Thu 12:15-2:45-5:20-7:50-10:20
Rise of the Guardians (G) Sat-Mon 12:15-2:40-5 Tue 3 Wed-Thu 12:40-3:25
Silver Linings Playbook (14A) Fri 7:35-10:15 Sat-Sun 2:05-4:55-7:35-10:15 Mon 2:05-4:55-7:35 Tue 5:20-8:15 Wed-Thu 5:45-8:30
Skyfall (PG) Fri 7-10:05 Sat-Sun 12:40-3:50-7-10:05 Mon 12:40-3:50-7
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 7:10-9:50 Sat-Sun 1:40-4:20-7:10-9:50 Mon 1:40-4:20-7:10 Tue 4:20-7:10-9:50 Wed-Thu 12:20-4-7:10-10
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Sat-Mon 12:25 Wed-Thu 12:30
Wreck-It Ralph 3D (G) Fri 6:20-9 Sat-Sun 3:45-6:20-9 Mon 3:45-6:20 Tue 3:05-5:30-10 Wed-Thu 3:40-6:20-9

Galaxy Cinemas Saskatoon
347 2nd Ave. South

Django Unchained (14A) Tue 11:45-3:20-7:05-10:35 Wed-Thu 11:20-3:10-6:50-10:35
Elf (G) Sat 11
The Guilt Trip (PG) Fri 5:30-8:10-10:30 Sat-Sun 12:30-3-5:30-8:10-10:30 Mon 12:30-3-5:30-8:10 Tue 12:30-3-5:30-8:10-10:30 Wed-Thu 12:30-3-5:30-8-10:30
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey (14A) Fri 3:45-5:50-7:30-9:30 Sat-Sun 12-2-3:45-5:50-7:30-9:30 Mon 12-2-3:45-5:50-7:30 Tue 2-5:50-9:30 Wed-Thu 1:15-5-8:45
The Hobbit: An Unexpected Journey 3D (14A) Fri 3:15-7-10:45 Sat-Sun 11:30-3:15-7-10:45 Mon 11:30-3:15-7 Tue-Thu 11:30-3:15-7-10:45 Fri 6:30-10:15 Sat 11-2:45-6:30-10:15 Sun 2:45-6:30-10:15 Mon 2:45-6:30 Tue 2:45-6:30-10:15 Wed-Thu 11-2:45-6:30-10:15
Jack Reacher (PG) Fri 4:45-7:55-10:50 Sat-Sun 1:45-4:45-7:55-10:50 Mon 1:45-4:45-7:55 Tue 1:45-4:45-7:55-10:50 Wed-Thu 10:55-1:50-4:50-7:50-11
Life of Pi 3D (G) Fri 4-6:50-10 Sat-Sun 1:10-4-6:50-10 Mon 1:10-4-6:50 Tue 1:10-4-6:50-10 Wed-Thu 1:05-4-7:10-10
Les Misérables (PG) Tue 11:40-3:10-6:40-10:10 Wed-Thu 11:10-2:55-6:40-10:25
Monsters, Inc. 3D (G) Fri 4:50-7:20-9:50 Sat-Sun 11:50-2:20-4:50-7:20-9:50 Mon 11:50-2:20-4:50-7:20 Tue 11:50-2:20-4:50-7:20-9:50 Wed-Thu 11:35-2:05-5:05-7:30-10:10
Parental Guidance (G) Tue 12-2:40-5:20-8:10-10:40 Wed-Thu 12-2:35-5:20-8:05-10:40
Rise of the Guardians (G) Fri 5:10-7:45-10:05 Sat 11:10-12:05-2:35-5:10-7:45-10:05 Sun 12:05-2:35-5:10-7:45-10:05 Mon 12:05-2:35-5:10-7:45 Tue 12:05-2:35-5:10 Wed-Thu 11:05-11:45-2:15-4:40
Royal Opera House: The Nutcracker (STC) Sat 12:55
Skyfall (PG) Fri 4:10-7:40-10:50 Sat 11:30-4:10-7:40-10:50 Sun 12:50-4:10-7:40-10:50 Mon 12:50-4:10-7:40 Tue 7:40-10:50 Wed-Thu 7:20-10:55
This Is 40 (14A) Fri 4:05-7:10-10:20 Sat-Sun 1-4:05-7:10-10:20 Mon 1-4:05-7:10 Tue 1-4:05-7:15-10:20 Wed-Thu 1:25-4:30-7:40-10:50
The Twilight Saga: Breaking Dawn Part 2 (14A) Fri 5:05-8-10:40 Sat 2:25-5:05-8-10:40 Sun 11:45-2:25-5:05-8-10:40 Mon 11:45-2:25-5:05-8
Wreck-It Ralph (G) Sat-Tue 11:30 Wed-Thu 11

Roxy Theatre
320 20th St West

Flight (14A) Sat 3:15-6:50 Sun 6:50 Mon 3:15-6:50 Wed-Thu 6:50
Hitchcock (PG) Fri 7-9:10 Sat-Sun 2:30-7-9:10 Mon 2:30-7 Wed-Thu 7-9:10
Neethaane En Ponvasantham (STC) Sun 3:30
No Films Showing Today (STC) Tue
The Paperboy (14A) Fri 9:30 Sat-Sun 1-9:30 Mon 1 Wed-Thu 9:30

Rainbow Cinemas Saskatoon
The Centre at Circle & 8th

Argo (PG) Fri-Thu 11:10-2:10-4:40-7:15-9:40
Cloud Atlas (14A) Fri-Thu 3
Dr. Seuss' the Lorax (G) Fri-Thu 11:50-2-4:20
Hotel Transylvania (G) Fri-Thu 11:30-1:50-4-7-9:10
Ice Age: Continental Drift (G) Fri-Thu 11:55-2:20-4:30
Killing Them Softly (14A) Fri-Thu 7:25-10
Looper (14A) Fri-Thu 7:05-9:50
Mirror Mirror (PG) Fri-Thu 11:40-2:05-4:35
Pitch Perfect (PG) Fri-Thu 11-1:30-4:10-7:10-9:45
Playing for Keeps (PG) Fri-Thu 7:20-9:55
Red Dawn (PG) Fri-Thu 11:20-1:40-3:55-7:30-9:55

Action

Django Unchained

Director. Quentin Tarantino

Stars. Jamie Foxx, Christoph Waltz

Whatever you think of Quentin Tarantino, his movies stand out in an industry full of mediocrity. Django Unchained, the filmmaker's homage to the spaghetti western, is certainly no different — casting Jamie Foxx as the titular slave-turned-bounty hunter. Aided by a smooth-talking "dentist" (Waltz), Django strives to save his wife from a plantation owner played by Leonardo Dicaprio. Hypnotic dialogue and Tarantino's sense of retro-style keep Django smartly entertaining, albeit a bit long at 165 minutes. **STEVE GOW**

Action

Jack Reacher

Director. Christopher McQuarrie

Stars. Tom Cruise, Rosamund Pike

Tom Cruise channels the macho swagger of John Wayne and Robert Mitchum in this refreshingly unpretentious, highly entertaining mystery thriller. Cruise plays an ex-military cop who is called in to aid defense lawyer Rosamund Pike in profiling another soldier who has murdered five civilians. Of course there's more to the serpentine case than meets the eye. Jack Reacher gets an extra star for casting cult German director Werner Herzog as a reptilian psychopath.
CHRIS ALEXANDER

Drama

Cirque du Soleil: Worlds Away

Director. Andrew Adamson

Stars. Erica Linz, Igor Zaripov

The problem with making a Cirque du Soleil movie is that the company's acrobatic shows are more spectacle than the medium of cinema truly allows. And these days, that's saying something. Worlds Away (which is a virtual "greatest hits" from seven Cirque shows) tries to thread a narrative throughout, but even that's lost amongst the thrilling stunts that are still more impressive on stage than in a 3D film.
STEVE GOW

Musical

Les Misérables

Director. Tom Hooper

Stars. Hugh Jackman, Russell Crowe, Anne Hathaway

Chances are, if you're excited to see Les Misérables, you already know what you're in for. Based on the hugely popular stage play, this brooding musical (there are no dance numbers here, folks) stars Jackman as a reformed thief who adopts the daughter of a prostitute in the years following the French Revolution. There's no denying the grandiosity of staging and the device using actors' live vocals leads to impressive performances, but the windy one-takes are just as wearisome.
STEVE GOW

Metro's 10 must-see films from the past year

NED EHRBAR
Metro World News in Hollywood

This may finally be the year that well-made big-budget studio fare finally gets some respect, a cause championed by the likes of Christopher Nolan. Which is awkward, because we were expecting more from his Dark Knight Rises, but he didn't quite stick the landing. If nothing else, 2012 proved to be a delightfully diverse year at the movies.

Cloud Atlas

A big, bold, far-reaching tale encompassing six different stories — and six very different visual and genre styles — to explore the enduring power of love and mankind's struggle for freedom.

Zero Dark Thirty

Director Kathryn Bigelow and screenwriter Mark Boal follow up their wins for the Hurt Locker with an even better film tracking the decade-long manhunt for Osama Bin Laden.

The Impossible

This true-life tale of a European family separated during the 2004 tsunami is incredibly manipulative, but it is some of the most artful, effective manipulation ever committed to film, and for that it deserves respect.

Beasts of the Southern Wild

A startling debut with a six-year-old unknown star (Quvenzhané Wallis) and a look and feel unlike anything seen before, this charming and moving fable is a rare treasure.

Cabin in the Woods

Joss Whedon had one of the year's biggest hits with the Avengers — which nearly made this list as well — but his real triumph this year comes in co-writing this sharp and hilarious deconstruction of the horror movie genre.

Rust and Bone

Oscar-winner Marion Cotillard turns in another striking and poignant performance as a whale trainer who loses her legs during an accident at work and rediscovers the beauty of life with the help of a down-on-his-luck bruiser of a single father (Matthais Schoenaerts).

Lincoln

Daniel Day-Lewis is of course the main attraction here, seamlessly transforming himself into the 16th president, but he shares the screen with a dizzying array of fantastic supporting performances.

Beasts of the Southern Wild. HANDOUT

Keep the Lights On

Writer-director Ira Sachs mines his own romantic past with aching honesty to tell the story of two men trying to love each other and ignore each other's addictions for nearly a decade. It's an unflinching portrayal of intimacy.

Anna Karenina

Director Joe Wright and actress Keira Knightley team up for their third literary adaptation with this gorgeous and risky translation of the Russian classic. Knightley shines, but the real standout here is Jude Law in a career-redefining turn as the cuckolded Alexei Karenin.

Skyfall

Sam Mendes leads the James Bond franchise to a new benchmark in quality just in time for its 50th anniversary, imbuing Daniel Craig's 007 with just the right amount of fun and '60s swagger.

METRO DISH

OUR TAKE ON THE WORLD OF CELEBRITIES

Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson

Stewart and Pattinson host Christmas party

Kristen Stewart and Robert Pattinson are reportedly getting pretty domestic, even going so far as to host a small Christmas party for their friends, according to Hollywood Life. "Kristen and Rob had a small, intimate Christmas tree decorating party on Sunday. They have a gorgeous tree set up at Kristen's, where Rob pretty much lives now," a source says. "They are not living with each other, but they are spending plenty of time with each other and they do sleep over often. They are in a really magical place right now despite some lingering trust issues on Rob's side."

Claire Danes

Danes welcomes baby Cyrus

Homeland star Claire Danes and husband Hugh Dancy welcomed their first child, a son, this week, her rep confirms to People magazine. Cyrus Christopher Dancy was born Monday "exactly at 3 p.m.," Dancy reportedly told friends and family in an email, according to Page Six. "Mother and baby are well, healthy and happy." Danes and Dancy first met filming Evening in 2006 and married in 2009.

Twitter

@JuddApatow
Five percent battery left on my iPhone. I shall tweet till it runs out of gas. So nervous about the release of the movie. Sleep? Ha!

@Sethrogen
Normally, talk shows are very scripted. Tonight, Letterman didn't ask me any of the pre determined questions. It was terrifying.

@samantharonson
Thinking about going to some AA meetings to meet some new drivers, I mean friends.

@SethMacFarlane
He's making a list, and checking it twice, and then like five more times 'cause he's got crazy OCD.

The Word

The weirdest celebrity hookups of 2012

THE WORD
Dorothy Robinson
scene@metronews.ca

Rosario Dawson and Danny Boyle
A 22-year age difference hasn't stopped director Danny Boyle and actress Rosario Dawson from "canoodling" all over London, per the brilliant and descriptive London press. The May/December romance apparently bloomed on the set of their new movie Trance. Was it the Olympics' bizarre opening ceremony that took Dawson's heart?

Simon Cowell and Carmen Electra
The rumours are kind of true: "She's not my girlfriend," Cowell, 53, explained when he called in to On Air with Ryan Seacrest yesterday about the rumours between the two stars. "We're people who date." How very "bro" of you, Simon.

Avril Lavigne and Chad Kroeger
To the surprise of most, the singers got engaged this year after quietly dating for six months, Lavigne's rep confirmed to People magazine. "A romantic relationship blossomed as they spent time writing together," the rep says. This will be the Canadian singer's second marriage after splitting from Sum 41 frontman Deryck Whibley in 2009. Kroeger "makes her so happy," a source tells the magazine. "Both of their families could not be more excited."

Bobbi Kristina Brown and her "adopted brother"
It was announced on the reality show, The Houstons: On Our Own that Bobbi Kristina Brown and Nick Gordon, who lived with Whitney Houston from the time he was 12, are indeed engaged. Of course, Gordon was never officially adopted by Houston and he isn't blood-related to Bobbi Kristina, but the pseudo-siblings have referred to each other as "brother" and "sister," which, you know, gives us the willies.

Taylor Swift and Connor Kennedy
Everyone seems to be aghast at this hook up (Swift was 22 at the time they were dating; Kennedy was 18) but no one says anything when there's 22 YEARS between the two of them (see: Dawson and Boyle). Have your next song be about double standards, Swift!

Johnny Depp

She's just not that into you

Newly single Johnny Depp is reportedly hung up on his Rum Diary co-star, Amber Heard.

The only problem is the feeling isn't exactly mutual, according to Radar Online. "Johnny and Amber have been having a lot of fun spending time with one another, but Amber keeps telling him she's not interested in being with him in a monogamous relationship," a source says.

"She says she feels she's too young for him, but the main factor is Amber prefers dating women over men and has no interest in committing to a guy — even if he is Johnny Depp."

Santa's cookies 2.0

Chocolate Shortbread Melt-Aways

This recipe makes five dozen small cookies. DAN CLAPSON

These cookies have a chocolate intensity that balances with their buttery richness, and when piped onto a baking tray, they look like chocolate kisses. They are a good addition to a holiday cookie tin.

- 1 cup (250 ml) unsalted butter, at room temperature
- 1 cup (250 ml) icing sugar, sifted
- 1 tbsp (15 ml) vanilla extract
- 1 1/2 cups (375 ml) all-purpose flour
- 1/3 cup (80 ml) Dutch process cocoa powder, sifted
- 2 tbsp (30 ml) cornstarch
- 1/2 tsp (2 ml salt)

1. Preheat the oven to 325 F (160 C) and line 2 baking trays with parchment paper.

2. Cream the butter and icing sugar together until smooth. Beat in the vanilla extract.

3. Add the flour, cocoa, cornstarch, and salt, and beat until evenly incorporated.

4. Spoon the soft cookie dough into a piping bag fitted with a large plain tip, and pipe 1-inch (2.5 cm) "kisses" onto the baking trays, leaving a 2-inch (5 cm) space between the cookies.

5. Bake the cookies for 12 to 14 minutes, until they lift away from the parchment paper without sticking. Let the cookies cool completely on the tray before removing. The cookies will keep in an airtight container for up to 3 days. **FROM ANNA OLSON'S BACK TO BAKING**

Holiday baking. As the undisputed queen of sweets, Anna Olson knows a thing or two about delicious treats

DAN CLAPSON
life@metronews.ca

Whether it's gingerbread, yule logs or some shortbread, with the holiday season comes the sweet smell of desserts in the air.

Food Network personality Anna Olson took some time out of her busy baking schedule to chat about what she's whipping up for the holidays. And, no surprise, she is as sweet as sugar!

What's the first memory you have of baking over the holidays?
Making Cherry Walnut Icebox cookies with my grandma.

I still make these cookies each year. It's not Christmas without them.

Do you and your family have any Christmas traditions when it comes to the baking?
My mom and I book a day each year to bake our family recipes as well as make perogies.

Then we go out for dinner to toast our accomplishment — and so we don't have to do any more dishes!

Fruitcake always gets a bad rap. Where do people go wrong with it?
I think people don't think you can alter the fruit and nut combination, but you have a great deal of flexibility.

So long as the total measurement of fruit and nuts is the same, feel free to switch out the candied peel for dried cherries or cranberries, or replace the prunes with figs!

Anna Olson. SUBMITTED

Any tips to ensure a sturdy gingerbread house that will stand the test of time and also small hands picking candy off of it?
For a gingerbread house that needs to remain intact for more than a week, then it really shouldn't be made to be eaten. In this case, use vegetable shortening instead of butter in the cookie dough. For an icing that holds up well, use a recipe that calls for meringue powder. It sets up firmly but it's also easy to work with when soft.

A Christmas cookie can take many shapes and forms. What is your go-to variety?
Other than my Grandma's Cherry Walnut cookies, I must have my Toblerone Shortbread onhand the entire month of December.

Your love for baking and sweets is undeniable, but is there one thing you don't like to whip up in your kitchen?
I've never really clicked with rum balls. I always pass them over if they are on a cookie platter and I don't make them at home.

Last, but perhaps most important, do you leave milk and cookies out for Santa on Christmas Eve?
You bet! I need to stay on the nice list!

Liquid Assets

White wines for zombies with Santa hats?

LIQUID ASSETS
Peter Rockwell
@therealwineguy
liquidassets@eastlink.ca

I write this column assuming the world hasn't ended today. If I'm wrong, here are some red wine suggestions to match with turkey for all you roaming hordes of zombies who may or may not have taken over the earth.

One of the wine world's most heinous old wives' tales is that white wines only go with white meats and red wines only go with red meats. If something has to end today, please let it be that thick slice of baloney.

You have to think about more than the star of the meal when it comes to a liquid pairing. Considering all the side dishes means a meal featuring the grand gobbler can cast a wide net catching many red wines.

For some outside the box drinking, think a mid-priced Italian Chianti, a robust Rioja from Spain or a fresh flavoured merlot from California, Australia or Chile.

As a long time pinot-file, I tend to crave a fruit-forward pinot noir when carving. New Zealand knows its way around the grape and the 2011 Oyster Bay Pinot Noir ($19.95 - $24.99) oozes ample very berry fruit that should appeal to all of your table mates, whether alive ... or living dead.

Happy holidays!

PRICES REFLECT THE RANGE ACROSS THE COUNTRY. SOME PRODUCTS MAY NOT BE AVAILABLE IN ALL PROVINCES.

Holiday cheer in a glass

1. In bowl, whisk egg yolks until a light golden colour, about 2 mins. Gradually add 1/4 cup of sugar and salt, beating until sugar dissolves. Add milk and half of nutmeg, then beat until slightly frothy.

2. In bowl, use electric mixer to beat egg whites until they hold soft peaks. With mixer running, sprinkle in 1 tbsp of remaining sugar and whip until egg whites form stiff peaks. Fold into yolk mix until light and airy with no lumps. Cover and refrigerate at least 2 hours.

3. Just before serving, place cold cream in a large chilled bowl. Use electric mixer to beat until the cream forms soft peaks. With mixer still running, gradually add remaining 1 tablespoon of sugar and vanilla. Beat until firm peaks form and there is no liquid left. Fold the whipped cream into the eggnog, sprinkle with the remaining nutmeg, and serve.

4. If spiking the eggnog, pour or spoon into glasses and add bourbon to taste to the individual glasses. **THE ASSOCIATED PRESS/ ELIZABETH KARMEL, A GRILLING AND SOUTHERN FOODS EXPERT.**

Ingredients

- 4 large eggs, yolks and whites separated
- 1/4 cup, plus 2 tbsp superfine sugar
- Pinch sea salt
- 2 cups whole milk
- 1 tsp freshly grated nutmeg
- 1 cup heavy cream
- 1 tsp vanilla extract
- Bourbon, to serve (optional)

This recipe serves six. MATTHEW MEAD/ THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

HOLIDAY 2012
gift guide

Tap into these tech gifts

iPhone 5 — $699 and up (without contract).

Samsung Galaxy Note 2 — $729 (without contract).

MIKE YAWNEY
For Metro

With processors and features that rival small computers, it's no wonder smartphones have quickly become the high tech gift for the holidays. There are many smartphones to choose from, but which one is right for your loved one? Take a look at our picks to find the perfect one.

iPhone 5 — $699 and up (without contract)
Featuring an all new design, Apple's latest smartphone is sure to turn heads. The diamond-cut bevelled edges not only look beautiful, they take away the rough edges, giving it an elegant feel. This is the first iPhone to feature LTE, which means you can take advantage of the latest high-speed wireless networks. The Retina display has also been made slightly larger so you get more usable workspace on the screen.

Samsung Galaxy Note 2 — $729 (without contract)
An ideal smartphone for those in marketing, advertising or someone with a creative flair. Often referred to as a smartphone/tablet hybrid, the Note II features a large 5.5-inch screen that can be navigated through touch or a special stylus known as an S Pen. Users can use the pen to sketch or draw on maps, photos or blueprints. The blazing quad-core processor gives this phone performance like no other.

Nokia Lumia 920 — $549.99 (without contract)
The most advanced Windows phone to date. Sporting wireless charging and a touchscreen so sensitive you can use it while wearing gloves, the Nokia 920 is sure to be a popular phone this holiday. The 8.7-megapixel camera also shoots surprisingly well in low light conditions.

LG Optimus G — $599 (without contract)
This smartphone has received the title of "Canada's fastest smartphone." Not only is it the first handset to feature Qualcomm's lightning-quick quad-core processor, it's also the first phone to support the 2,600 MHz spectrum, which is the fastest LTE network in the country. The Optimus G also features a voice-activated camera that will snap photos whenever someone says the word "cheese."

Sony Xperia T — $549 (no contract, price may vary)
Known simply as "The Bond Phone," the Xperia T is the same smartphone used by 007 himself in Skyfall. This handset features a 13-megapixel camera and is Playstation certified, which is perfect for those who enjoy gaming on the go. Music and photos can easily be shared by bringing this smartphone close to other NFC-enabled devices.

Mophie Powerstation Pro — $99
Smartphones are simply paperweights without a fully charged battery. Fortunately, this device will ensure your battery lasts all day and then some. The Powerstation Pro holds enough juice to recharge your smartphone up to four times. It's lightweight, rugged, dustproof and waterproof so it's perfect for those constantly on the go.

Ballistic Cases — various prices
You spent a fortune on your new smartphone, so why not protect your investment. Ballistic cases are designed to do just that. Ballistic cases have been tested to withstand drops, being run over by vehicles, and Fido's canine teeth.

LG Optimus G — $599 (without contract), top left, Sony Xperia T — $549 (no contract, price may vary), centre, Nokia Lumia 920 — $549.99 (without contract).

4 shopping days left

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** Wireless broadband Internet access required for system update and online features. Netflix account required. Nintendo properties are trademarks of Nintendo. © 2012 Nintendo.

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Nathan MacKinnon, from Sidney Crosby's hometown of Cole Harbour, N.S., is living his dream overseas with a spot on Canada's world junior roster. The youngest player on Team Canada is considered a possible No. 1 pick in the 2013 NHL draft. JEFF MCINTOSH/THE CANADIAN PRESS

MacKinnon dreaming of gold this Christmas

World juniors. Highly touted 17-year-old living dream with chance for glory with Team Canada

PHILIP CROUCHER
Metro in Halifax

Nathan MacKinnon will wake up Christmas morning far away from the comforts of home.

He'll open his eyes in a Russian hotel room next to a teammate who, like him, is spending the holidays thousands of miles from the family gatherings and traditions he's come to love.

Still, there is no place MacKinnon would rather be this holiday season. That's because the 17-year-old Cole Harbour, N.S., standout with the Halifax Mooseheads is fulfilling a dream — one shared by most teenagers who lace up their skates — to play for Canada at the world junior hockey championships.

"It's different, but I'm doing something that I love. I'm having a lot of fun," he said Thursday by phone after playing in Canada's first exhibition game, a 3-2 loss to Finland. "It would be nice to be home for Christmas, but this is an excellent thing."

MacKinnon, who doesn't turn 18 until September, is the youngest member of Team Canada, but goes into the tournament with plenty of expectations.

A potential first overall pick in next year's NHL draft, MacKinnon will be looked upon to play an important role among 18- and 19-year-olds.

Whatever that role turns out to be, MacKinnon is ready to accept it. With the Mooseheads, he's on the No. 1 line and getting plenty of power-play time. With Team Canada, he could be used as a 13th forward and get the odd shift on special teams.

"I want to help the team and I want to be an impact player," said MacKinnon, who sits third in Quebec Major Junior Hockey League scoring with 22 goals and 30 assists in 30 games. "But I'm going to do whatever role I'm given and hopefully the team can be successful."

MacKinnon is the first Nova Scotian to play at the world juniors for Canada since 2007 and 2008, when Brad Marchand of Hammonds Plains cracked the team.

Quoted

"It was a cool experience — a world junior game — it was exciting. And I'm sure every game is going to get more and more exciting."

Nathan MacKinnon, on playing for Team Canada in a 3-2 exhibition loss to Finland Thursday

Exhibition play

'Discipline the subplot' in Canada's loss to Finns

It was an early wake-up call for Canada's world junior team.

Undisciplined and out of sorts, the Canadians dropped an exhibition game to host Finland 3-2 on Thursday. Two of the Finnish goals were scored with a 5-on-3 power play during a game that saw Canada assessed nine minor penalties in total.

"I think the challenge for us obviously is coming together as a team," said Canadian coach Steve Spott. "It's our first game. But ultimately I think discipline is the subplot here tonight, where we have to get used to the standard of officiating and deal with our discipline a lot smarter than we did tonight."

Miro Aaltonen scored the winning goal 7:16 into the third period. Markus Granlund and Ville Jarvelainen had the power-play markers earlier in the game.

Griffin Reinhart and Mark Scheifele replied for Canada with goals 36 seconds apart in the second period while Malcolm Subban finished with 19 saves.

Canada was outshot 22-15 overall and Spott expects to see a better offensive effort when his team faces Sweden in another exhibition game on Saturday.

"I think we've got to create more offence, but that comes from staying out of the penalty box," he said. "That to me is going to be our challenge here. "

Canada played without forward Jonathan Huberdeau, who served the final game of a four-game suspension for abusing an official in the QMJHL.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

Ivor Wynne reduced to rubble in Hamilton

Construction crews continue to dismantle Ivor Wynne Stadium, the former home of the CFL's Tiger-Cats, on Thursday in Hamilton, Ont. The work is expected to be completed in February. SCOTT GARDNER/THE HAMILTON SPECTATOR

CFL

Condell follows Austin to Ticats

Tommy Condell is following Kent Austin to the Hamilton Tiger-Cats.

Austin hired Condell as Hamilton's offensive co-ordinator and receivers coach Thursday. The move comes three days after Austin was named the Ticats' head coach, GM and vice-president of football operations.

Condell joins the Ticats after serving as Austin's assistant head coach and wide receivers coach for three seasons at Cornell.

THE CANADIAN PRESS

CFL

Hall of Famer Keys passes away at 89

Canadian Football Hall of Fame inductee Eagle Keys has died at the age of 89.

Keys played centre and linebacker with the Montreal Alouettes (1949-51) and with the Edmonton Eskimos (1952-54), being named to three all-star teams. He became a coach, starting as an assistant in Edmonton in 1955. He was named the Esks' head coach in 1959, a job he held until 1963. Keys also coached the Roughriders (1965-70) and B.C. Lions (1971-75).

THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHL just a shot away from pulling the plug on season

Lockout letdown.
With labour talks at an impasse, cancelling the season may soon be Bettman's only option

The NHL has moved one step closer to calling off another season because of a labour dispute.

Regular-season games through Jan. 14 were wiped off the schedule on Thursday afternoon, setting up a potential timeline for the league's collective bargaining negotiations with the NHL Players' Association.

It was likely the final batch of games that will be cancelled during the lockout. If commissioner Gary Bettman holds true to his word that the league must play at least a 48-game schedule with playoffs ending in June, the next announcement from the league will either be a new CBA or a second cancelled season in eight years.

"When it gets to the point where we can't play a season with integrity, with a representative schedule, then we'll be done," Bettman said earlier this month. "If you go back in history, in '94-95 I think we played 48 games. I can't imagine wanting to play fewer than that."

A total of 625 games have been cancelled because of the current lockout, which represents 50.8 per cent of the season. The all-star game in Columbus has also been axed.

When the NHL staged a 48-game season following the 1994-95 lockout, the CBA was agreed to on Jan. 11 and the puck was dropped on Jan. 20. The regular season ran through May 3 and saw the Stanley Cup awarded on June 24 — thanks to sweeps in four of the last seven playoff series.

The league contemplated the possibility of a 28-game season in 2004-05 before finally cancelling play on Feb. 16.

There was no statement included with Thursday's announcement of the additional game cancellations.

In an email, deputy commissioner Bill Daly declined to characterize whether Jan. 15 could be viewed as the last date to salvage a shortened schedule.

Talks have been at a standstill since the NHLPA last presented a proposal on Dec. 6 in New York. THE CANADIAN PRESS

NHLPA vote

Pushing for a disclaimer

National Hockey League players are expected to be overwhelmingly in favour of an interest of disclaimer when their vote on the motion wraps up Friday.

The players appear to be pushing full ahead for the disclaimer, which would see the players' executive board give the power to Don Fehr and his leadership group to remove themselves from representing the players.

Under that scenario, the union would disband and force a court settlement to end the lockout. But that step has not been finalized yet. TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

Dashing through the snow

Canada's Erin Mielzynski speeds past a pole during the first run of a women's alpine skiing World Cup event on Thursday in Are, Sweden. Seventeen-year-old American Mikaela Shiffrin earned her first career victory, winning a night slalom ahead of Swedish home favourite Frida Hansdotter. Mielzynski, of Guelph, Ont., finished fifth. GIOVANNI AULETTA/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

NBA. T-Wolves' sharp shooting stops rolling Thunder

Oklahoma City's Reggie Jackson, left, defends against Timberwolves guard Ricky Rubio on Thursday in Minneapolis. HANNAH FOSLIEN/THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

J.J. Barea ended Oklahoma City's 12-game winning streak almost all by himself.

Barea scored 14 of his 18 points in the fourth quarter to lift the Minnesota Timberwolves to a 99-93 victory over the Thunder on Thursday night.

Kevin Love had 28 points, 11 rebounds and seven assists and Nikola Pekovic had 24 points and 10 rebounds for Minnesota.

But it was Barea who was the key, scoring 12 straight at one point for the Wolves to hold off the team with the best record in the league.

Kevin Durant had 33 points, seven rebounds and six assists for the Thunder, who had not lost a game since Nov. 23 at Boston.

Barea was also a nuisance on defence, drawing an offensive foul on Durant with 2:24 to play.

The normally super-cool Durant uncharacteristically lost his composure, picking up a technical foul for arguing the call as well.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Jabari Parker

High-school hoops star is Duke-bound

Prized prospect Jabari Parker of Chicago's Simeon Career Academy, one of the most highly touted recruits in years, is headed to Duke.

With a national TV audience watching, he announced his decision at a news conference on Thursday. Parker can't sign his letter of intent until April 17, but he made his intentions clear with one highly anticipated oral commitment.

He said his decision really came down to choosing between three schools, with the Florida Gators and Michigan State Spartans right there with the Blue Devils. In the end, he chose to play for Mike Krzyzewski for at least a year before making what many believe will ultimately be a jump to the NBA.

Parker received the Gatorade Boys Basketball Player of the Year award for Illinois last March after leading Simeon to its third straight state championship while averaging 19.5 points and 8.9 rebounds as a junior.

THE ASSOCIATED PRESS

Christine Nesbitt competes in the 1,000-metre race on Nov. 18, the final day of the Essent ISU World Cup Speed Skating at Thialf Ice Stadium in Heerenveen, Netherlands. DEAN MOUH/GETTY IMAGES

Nesbitt's quest for perfection

Fire on ice. Despite a world record and slew of medals in 2012, Ontario speedskater strives for the unattainable

Insight into what makes Christine Nesbitt such a superb athlete can be gleaned from her views on how she closed out her remarkable 2012.

The 27-year-old speedskater from London, Ont., who began the year by smashing the world record in the 1,000 metres in January and winning the 1,000-metre and 1,500-metre on consecutive days at the world single distance championships in March, had a dominant fall, grabbing seven medals — four gold, one silver, two bronze — in four World Cup events.

It all added up to her being shortlisted for the Lou Marsh Award as Canada's athlete of the year, which went to soccer star Christine Sinclair.

But it's far from enough for Nesbitt.

"I'm not very happy how I raced this fall," she said this week in an interview from her home in Calgary. "I don't feel like I had an excellent race."

To be an Olympian and a world champion obviously requires tremendous dedication, commitment and mental toughness to go with athletic ability.

Nesbitt takes it to another level. The 2010 gold medallist at the Vancouver Olympics not only wants to win every competition she enters, she's motivated by a quest for something she admits is impossible — perfection.

"The problem is you're always trying to achieve something that is, essentially, unattainable," Nesbitt said of her goal to produce a flawless race.

Nesbitt thought she'd done it last January at the Olympic Oval in Calgary.

Angered by her skate in the 500 metres earlier that day, she tore over the 1,000-metre course in one minute, 12.68 seconds, shaving nearly a half-second off the world mark set by teammate Cindy Klassen in 2006 on the same ice.

"At the time, I didn't know how I could get better," Nesbitt said this week. "But this summer, I watched it again and saw mistakes, or at least things that I could do better."

While some might call this a curse, Nesbitt and her coaches see it as one of her strengths, something that gives her an edge going into the Olympics in Sochi in 14 months. If there wasn't something to strive for, there would be complacency and that is one of the biggest enemies of the elite athlete.

"It is a bit surprising to hear an athlete be frustrated with their performance when they're consistently on the podium," said Mark Wild, who co-coaches Nesbitt along with Xiuli Wang. "But that's one of her assets as an athlete.

"She's certainly intense and she expects a lot out of herself."

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

The need for speed

And it all began on a hockey rink

Speedskater Christine Nesbitt's first experience on blades was playing minor hockey before she moved on to short-track speedskating at age 12 and long-track at 18.

She likes each event for different reasons, calling it "a toss-up" for her favourite.

Nesbitt likes the 1,000 metres because it's "fun" going so fast.

"I've never driven a car really fast, but I think it must be the same feeling except I'm generating that speed myself," she said. "It's pretty amazing."

By contrast, Nesbitt calls the 1,500 metres "excruciatingly painful" but with a great sense of satisfaction after a good race, unlike any other distance.

Coach Mark Wild said Nesbitt's love of the sport is reflected in the work she puts into it. In addition to intense skating workouts, she endures the long bike rides in the summer heat to build endurance and lifts heavy weights for strength.

TORSTAR NEWS SERVICE

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Horoscopes

♈ Aries
March 21 - April 20
Whatever your age or position, you are about to get the chance to move up in the world. Powerful people will be watching you closely today and over the weekend, so make sure they like what they see.

♉ Taurus
April 21 - May 21
Times are good and about to get even better. It may take two or three days for things to pick up speed but once they do, you will be on a roller coaster ride of fun and games. Hang on and enjoy the experience.

♊ Gemini
May 22 - June 21
Most likely you are reading too much into a situation that is of no real importance but for your own peace of mind, you should investigate further. If someone is trying to take you for a ride — get off quick!

♋ Cancer
June 22 - July 23
You will notice a subtle change in the way other people react to you today. But it is the way that you choose to behave towards them that will determine whether the next few weeks are going to be easy or difficult.

♌ Leo
July 24 - Aug. 23
The Sun's change of signs puts the emphasis on matters of a work nature, and also on your physical health. The two are closely related. In a nutshell: If you work too hard your wellbeing may suffer. Slow down!

♍ Virgo
Aug. 24 - Sept. 23
You don't have to do anything special today: The Sun's change of signs will do it all for you. One of the most active times of the year is about to begin, so prepare yourself mentally for what lies ahead.

♎ Libra
Sept. 24 - Oct. 23
No matter how many interesting things may be taking place in the world, you must focus exclusively on the needs and desires of loved ones today. There has never been a better time to show how much you care.

♏ Scorpio
Oct. 2 04 - Nov. 22
Keep your options open today because there will be all sorts of new and interesting events taking place and you need to be free to react to any or all of them. Part of the meaning of life is to have fun.

♐ Sagittarius
Nov. 23 - Dec. 21
The past few weeks have been hectic to say the least and the momentum you have built up will keep you going for quite some time. But don't forget you have limits.

♑ Capricorn
Dec. 22 - Jan. 20
You may be eager to get started on a new project but think before you act. Make sure you are well prepared. Any day can be a new beginning. Though, yes, this one is more special than most.

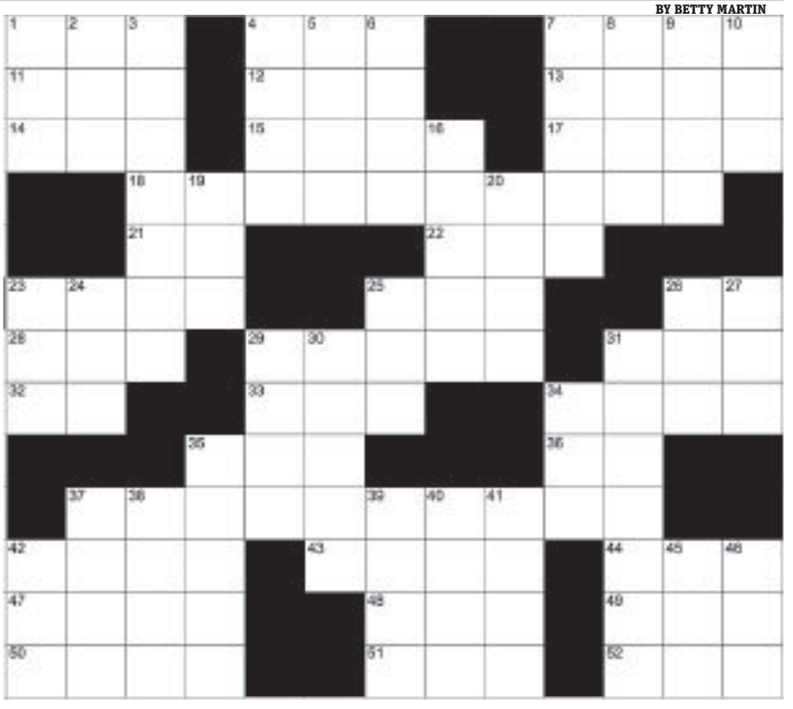
♒ Aquarius
Jan. 21 - Feb. 19
You may be a bit more reclusive than usual today and over the weekend but there is no need to worry about it. You're not withdrawing from the world, you're just getting your thoughts and feelings in order.

♓ Pisces
Feb. 20 - March 20
You seem to be having doubts about something that only a few days ago you thought was the best idea in the world. The good news is your doubts will pass very quickly and then you can get on and make it happen.

SALLY BROMPTON

Crossword

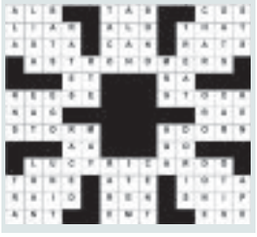
BY BETTY MARTIN



Across
1. Fishing need
4. To and —
7. Catch sight of
11. Silkworm
12. Make tracks
13. Desire
14. Schedule abbr.
15. Sale condition
17. Garfield pal
18. Seafarer's beacon
21. Disco proof of age (abbr.)
22. Select
23. Flintstone pet
25. Before
26. Magnum, P.I.'s pilot buddy
28. School subj.
29. — Acres
31. Cruise setting
32. Emergency room personnel (abbr.)
33. — Lingus
34. Smack a fly
35. Tavern brew
36. "Dirty Harry" actor (init.)
37. Eastern prov.
42. Cloak
43. Fashion magazine
44. Scottish cap
47. Barbra's "Funny Girl" co-star
48. Be indisposed
49. View
50. Hide
51. One of The Three Stooges
52. Family tree member (abbr.)

Down
1. Soak flax
2. Globe
3. Ringing up, old style
4. Flown at the 2012 Olympic games
5. Poison ivy result
6. Exclude
7. Whoop
8. Pea jackets
9. Mayberry boy
10. Casual top
16. Sandcastle spot
19. Wedding vows
20. Diner sign
23. German article
24. Quaint hotels
25. According to
26. Afternoon gathering
27. Garfield, for one
29. Elaborate party
30. Actress Witherspoon
31. Spring or Fall clothing
34. Chem. or biol.
35. Deviate
37. Point a finger at
38. October birthstone
39. Type of chowder
40. Stew
41. Prefix with confidence
42. Officer of the peace
45. Yes, to Angus
46. Actor Gibson

Yesterday's Crossword



What's online

See today's answers metronews.ca/answers.

Sudoku

How to play
Fill in the grid, so that every row, every column and every 3x3 box contains the digits 1-9. There is no math involved. You solve the puzzle with reasoning and logic.

7		8	9				4	
		3			2			1
		1			6	3		
				3		5	8	
	9	6		5				
		9	7			6		
6			8			7		
	2				4	1		5

Yesterday's Sudoku

4	8	7	6	9	2	1	3	5
6	5	3	4	7	1	8	2	9
9	2	1	3	8	5	4	6	7
8	6	5	7	1	4	2	9	3
3	7	9	5	2	8	6	1	4
2	1	4	9	3	6	7	5	8
5	3	8	2	6	7	9	4	1
1	9	6	8	4	3	5	7	2
7	4	2	1	5	9	3	8	6

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